

the Kansas National Guard. These guardsmen work in cooperation with local firefighters and emergency personnel to combat fires and save people, property, and animals.

I stand today to commend their hard work and thank them for their service. These fires are a stark reminder of the devastation created by wildfires last year and provide a reminder of the importance in standing together in the face of difficulties.

RECOGNIZING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN WASHINGTON'S SEVENTH DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of our wonderful public schools across the country.

Every child, Mr. Speaker, has the right to pursue opportunity, and through our public schools our country makes that opportunity a reality every day. Education imparts practical and invaluable skills that kids carry with them for the rest of their lives, teaches our children to become engaged members of our society and our democracy, and public education is a great equalizer, having remained a means of mobility for generations of families. I know this firsthand, Mr. Speaker. I came to the United States when I was 16 years old by myself to go to college and take advantage of all the opportunities that an American education had to offer.

For much of our Nation's history, our public schools have served this essential purpose of helping students and their families to thrive. And public schools, which serve all students, regardless of who they are, are the only institutions where the vast majority of our kids can access these benefits.

It is those schools and the teachers, professionals, and staff who serve in them—and I use “serve” very deliberately, because it is a service to be in our public schools, where teachers could earn so much more elsewhere but choose to be in the public schools because that is the place where they can help the most kids. It is those schools and those amazing successes in my own district that I want to celebrate today.

Monserrat is a teacher at Concord International Elementary School where almost 80 percent of the students are from low-income families and more than half are English language learners. Last year, Monserrat created a writing lesson using both Spanish and English. Before this lesson, most of the kids wrote at a kindergarten or a first grade level, but by the end of that lesson, every single one of her students was able to write a complex complete sentence. And over the next year Monserrat's second graders became ambassadors for Concord International, giving tours of their school in both Spanish and English. It is clear that

her investment in her students opened doors to achievement for these Seattle public school students.

Another story comes from Shorewood High School in Shoreline, Washington. Emily, a leader on her school's robotics team, wasn't interested in STEM until she got to high school because no one encouraged her to pursue it when she was younger. It wasn't until she learned about the lack of representation of women and girls in STEM that she realized that something needed to change. And last summer, Emily launched the Full STEAM Ahead Club, an all girls' mentoring group that encourages middle school girls to pursue science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. The youth mentors showed girls how important it is to engage in STEM fields early, and they work every day to expand girls' perceptions of what they can achieve, which is to say, anything.

And at Evergreen High School, a youth-led group called FEEST is working to combat food injustice in public schools. One of their campaigns recently made waves when youth leaders created the first student advisory committee with the district's nutrition services director. They provided the director with feedback on how to increase fresh and culturally relevant food items on school menus. And last month, they successfully got one of the recipes they created onto the district menu.

Through their work, these young people have developed relationships with their classmates, with decision-makers at the school district level, and they are building power and using their own innate intelligence about the issues that matter to create change in their schools and communities.

Mr. Speaker, I share these stories today to highlight how critical public schools are to my constituents and all Members. And as Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to ensure that we continue supporting our public schools. For example, public money should go to public schools. It should not be used to bankroll private entities and corporations that don't deliver excellent, inclusive, equitable instruction.

Our public schools are under attack right now from the Secretary of Education and the Trump administration. Our public schools and public money should not be used to generate a profit. And teachers, Mr. Speaker, should be teaching and not carrying guns to try to protect their students.

As tens of thousands of students across our country and here in the capital have rallied and called for attention to safety in our public schools by passing sensible gun reform legislation, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this body has yet to address the issue of guns and safety in our schools and in our classrooms.

And if we want to support education for our kids, we should make sure that they have the right to live. That is

what we are talking about: kids who go to sleep at night wondering if they are going to cower in the corners of their classrooms the next day because somebody has a gun because Congress has not done our job.

The Trump administration and Secretary DeVos have demonstrated that they want to make sure that the money is what prevails. And, Mr. Speaker, today as we honor our public schools, we also need to honor the responsibility of Congress to protect our students and protect our public education.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ANDREW KISTLER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARSHALL). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, today in Franklin, Pennsylvania, an American hero will be laid to rest. Mr. Andrew A. Kistler, past commander of the Disabled American Veterans, died on March 9 in Erie, Pennsylvania. He was 88 years old.

Andy Kistler was a tireless advocate for disabled veterans not only in Pennsylvania, but nationally. A Korean war veteran who was almost mortally wounded Christmas week in 1952, he lost both of his legs, a finger, and a concussion put him into a deep coma.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with you the words of the late Korean war medic and journalist Chris Farlekas. He helped save Andy Kistler, a 21-year-old baseball player from Franklin who arrived at the 11th Evacuation Hospital for care. I quote from this letter:

“The ward was crammed with casualties, and every helicopter that landed outside the tent brought even more. The doctor said Andy was too far gone, that he would die.

“But something inside me said no.

“I still don't completely understand my ferocity in needing Andy to live. Maybe it was because I'd seen so much death already in the 4 months that I'd been in the war, holding frightened, dying young men as they talked about home. Andy was my test case with God. If he lived, I'd believe. If not, tough.

“So for 3 days I sat with Andy, willing him to live.

“On Christmas Eve, several of the nurses, doctors, and corpsmen went through the 11th Evac, singing Christmas carols. At exactly midnight, they came to the shock ward and sang ‘Silent Night.’ It may have sounded a little ragged, off-pitch, but to me it was absolutely beautiful, angelic.

“As I listened, Andy came out of the coma, opened his eyes, grabbed my hand, and softly sang, ‘All is calm, all is bright.’ The doctors said it was a miracle.”

Andy and Chris spoke about that glorious moment in the PBS documentary, “Korean War Stories,” produced in 2002.